

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 PM-03 DODE-00 EUR-13 PRS-01 RSR-01

/067 W

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P 200815Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2660

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

COMUSSAG PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 8703

LIMDIS

SAIGON PLEASE PASS TO SIR ROBERT THOMPSON

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MOPS, CB

SUBJECT: VISIT OF SIR ROBERT THOMPSON TO PHNOM PENH AUGUST 18-19

REF: PHNOM PENH 8518

1. ON HIS SECOND VISIT AUGUST 18-19 SIR ROBERT THOMPSON WAS BRIEFED BY US ON THE MILITARY SITUATION AND ITS NEAR-TERM PROSPECTS, MET THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE, AUSTRALIAN, SOUTH KOREAN, AND BRITISH AMBASSADORS, AND CALLED SEPARATELY ON AUGUST 19 ON PRIME MINISTER IN TAM AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ.

2. DATT AND HIS ASSISTANTS RECOUNTED THE VARIOUS EFFORTS IN TRAIN BY FANK TO STRENGTHEN THE DEFENSES OF THE PHNOM PENH AREA, NOTING THAT WEAK SPOTS STILL EXIST ON THE SE FRONT BETWEEN HIGHWAY ONE AND THE BASSAC AND TO THE WEST  
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ON HIGHWAY FOUR. THE POINT WAS STRESSED THAT MANY FANK

UNITS ARE STILL UNDERSTRENGTH AND THAT TO COMPENSATE FOR THE LACK OF SUCCESS THUS FAR OF EITHER CONSCRIPTION OR VOLUNTARY RECRUITMENT IN PHNOM PENH THE GENERAL STAFF IS BRINGING BADLY NEEDED REINFORCEMENTS TO THE CAPITAL FROM THE PROVINCES, USUALLY OVER THE OBJECTIONS OF PROVINCIAL COMMANDERS. FANK EFFORTS TO COORDINATE ARMY-KHMER AIR FORCE (KAF) OPERATIONS AND TO IMPROVE KAF PERFORMANCE WERE ALSO DESCRIBED. DATT COMMENTED THAT DESPITE THE VERY SERIOUS MANPOWER SHORTAGE THE MORALE OF COMMANDERS AND THE QUALITY OF THEIR LEADERSHIP HAVE RISEN FROM THE LOW POINT OF MID-JULY AND HE CREDITED FANK WITH A SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN EVEN CHANCE TO HOLD AGAINST THE NEXT ENEMY OFFENSIVE IN THE CAPITAL AREA. SUMMARIZING THIS PRESENTATION IN A LATER CONVERSATION, SIR ROBERT COMMENTED THAT THE MILITARY SITUATION APPEARED TO HIM TO BE STARK BUT NOT DESPERATE, AND THAT SEEMS TO US TO BE A REASONABLY ACCURATE DESCRIPTION.

3. THE TIMING OF A RENEWED ENEMY INITIATIVE AGAINST THE CAPITAL, AND INSURGENCY CAPABILITIES TO MOUNT ONE, WERE ALSO REVIEWED. WE COMMENTED THAT THE INSURGENCY HAS TAKEN SIGNIFICANT MANPOWER LOSSES AND THAT SOME UNITS APPEAR TO HAVE SUPPLY PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY IN MUNITIONS. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE SOME SPECULATION IN PHNOM PENH THAT THE PRESENT LULL IN FIGHTING COULD CONTINUE FOR SOME MONTHS, WE TOLD SIR ROBERT THAT OUR APPRAISAL IS THAT THE ENEMY INTENDS TO LAUNCH NEW ATTACKS AGAINST THE CAPITAL BETWEEN NOW AND EARLY SEPTEMBER IF IT CAN DO SO. THESE ATTACKS WILL BE MADE, HOWEVER, FROM A RELATIVELY WEAKER BASE THAN BEFORE AND HOPEFULLY AGAINST A MUCH MORE STALWART FANK PERIMETER.

4. IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH IN TAM AND SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ, SIR ROBERT STRESSED THE NEED FOR A GREATER POPULAR BACKING FOR FANK IN THEIR CURRENT PREPARATIONS TO REPULSE

THE NEXT ENEMY THRUST AND SIMULTANEOUSLY POINTED TO THE IMPORTANCE OF RALLYING DISAFFECTED ELEMENTS IN THE ENEMY-CONTROLLED COUNTRYSIDE. HE CITED THE REPORTS OF ARMED CONFLICT AMONG KHMER INSURGENT AND NVA/VC UNITS IN  
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TAKEO AND KAMPOT PROVINCES AS WELL AS REPORTS OF SPREADING DISILLUSIONMENT ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE WITH THE HARSHNESS OF COMMUNIST DOCTRINE AND CONTROLS. HE SAID THAT AN APPEAL TO KHMER NATIONALISM AGAINST THE ALIEN INVADER SHOULD HAVE INCREASING CHANCES OF SUCCESS IN THIS ENVIRONMENT.

5. SIR ROBERT FOUND IN TAM IN A REMARKABLY BETTER FRAME

OF MINE THAN IN HIS FIRST MEETING WITH HIM A WEEK AGO.  
IN TAM MADE NO MENTION OF RESIGNING, DID NOT CRITICIZE  
HIS WORKING CONDITIONS, BUT RECOUNTED INSTEAD WITH SOME  
ENTHUSIASM HIS EXPERIENCES OF THE PREVIOUS DAY (AUGUST 18).  
IN TAM REPORTED HE HAD VISITED FANK POSITIONS ON HIGHWAY  
5 NORTH OF THE CAPITAL AND ON HIGHWAY TWO SOUTH OF  
PHNOM PENH AND HAD FOUND SOME IMPROVEMENT IN MORALE  
ALTHOUGH THERE ARE STILL GAPS IN THE SOUTHERN PERIMETER.  
HE SPOKE AT LENGTH OF A NEW REPORT THAT A GROUP OF 500  
INSURGENT SIN THE PEANG LOVEA AREA WEST OF PHNOM PENH  
WISH TO RALLY TO HIM AND SIAD, WITHOUT ELABORATION, THAT  
HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS WITH MARSHAL LON NOL ON AUGUST 18  
AND THAT HE WAS PROCEEDING ON A MISSION TO ORGANIZE THE  
RECEPTION OF A FIRST GROUP OF WOUNDED FROM THIS INSURGENCY  
UNIT IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING OUR MEETING. (WE CAUTIONED  
HIM TO TAKE APPROPRIATE SECURITY PRECAUTIONS). IN TAM

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 PM-03 DODE-00 EUR-10 PRS-01 RSR-01

/064 W

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P 200815Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2661

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

CINCPAC PRIORITY

COMUSSAG PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 8703

LIMDIS

SEEMED ABSORBED IN THIS PROJECT AND GENERALLY HEARTENED  
OVER OTHER REPORTS HE SAID HE HAD RECEIVED INDICATING  
SPREADING DISAFFECTION WITH THE INSURGENTS IN OCCUPIED

AREAS AND ENEMY MANPOWER SHORTAGES SO SEVER THAT BOYS  
AGED 10 TO 12 ARE BEING ARMED.

6. SIR ROBERT FOUND MAJOR GENERAL SOSTHENE IN A  
CONFIDENT FRAME OF MIND. SOSTHENE EXPRESSED DOUBTS  
THAT A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE CAMBODIAN PROBLEM  
WILL BE POSSIBLE AS LONG AS THE NVA/VC RETAIN A  
SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE IN THE COUNTRY AND DOMINANCE OF THE  
INSURGENCY, AND NOTED THAT HE HAD COMMENTED TO FORMER  
PRIME MINISTER SON SANN IN THIS VEIN DURING A MEETING  
WITH SANN EARLIER THAT MORNING. SOSTHENE ALSO REVIEWED  
WITH SIR ROBERT, BGEN CLELAND, AND DATT COL. BURNELL  
THE MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO IMPORVE PHNOM PENH DEFENSES  
AND KAF PERFORMANCE, TO MAKE BETTER USE OF ARTILLERY, AND  
TO HOLD THE PROVINCIAL CENTER OF KOMPONG CHAM, WHICH HAS  
NOW BECOME THE OBJECTE OF A MAJOR TEST OF STRENGTH  
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BETWEEN FANK AND THE INSURGENTS.

7. COMMENT. I SHALL NOT TRY OT ANTICIPATE IN THIS  
MESSAGE THE ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION HERE WHICH SIR  
ROBERT WILL PROVIDE WASHINGTON LATER THIS WEEK. I WOULD  
NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAS AGREED TO WRITE MARSHAL ON  
NOL CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFORTS TO RALLY  
INSURGENTS TO THE GKR, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR POLITICAL  
AFFILIATION. LON NOL HAS TENDED TO VIEW RALLIERS AS AN  
AUGMENTATIO OF HIS PERSONAL POWER BASE RATHER THAN AS  
A PRIZE IN THE POLITICAL-MILITARY STRUGGLE WITH THE  
INSURGENCY AND HE HAS LOOKED WITH SUSPICION IN THE  
PAST ON COMPETITIVE EFFORTS IN THIS FIELD. IF HIS  
SUSPICIONS OF IN TAM AND OTHER CAN BE ALLAYED, SOME  
PROGRESS IN RALLYING MAY BE POSSIBLE. IN HIS LETTER SIR  
ROBERT WILL POINT OUT THAT THE POLITICAL CONTEST FOR THE  
POPULATION MUST BE PRESSED VIGOROUSLY ALONG WITH FANK  
MILITARY ACTIONS IF THE GKR IS TO ACHIEVE A POSITION OF  
SUFFICIENT STRENGTH TO INDUCE THE OTHER SIDE TO NEGOTIATE.  
SWANK

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